



News Release

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Southwest Indiana receives \$5.1 million federal grant to build regional economy through workforce and economic development strategies

INDIANAPOLIS (January 19, 2007) -- A grant of \$5.1 million over three years has been awarded to the State of Indiana by the U.S. Department of Labor for a Southwest Indiana consortium to strengthen collaboration between workforce development and economic development organizations and invest in workforce development strategies, the Department of Workforce Development announced today.

The grant was awarded to the Southwest Indiana Go (SWIGO), a consortium which includes the Southwest Indiana Regional Workforce Board, Evansville Regional Business Committee, Inc., University of Evansville, University of Southern Indiana, Vectren Corporation, Welborn Foundation, Vincennes University, Ivy Tech Community College, the City of Evansville and numerous other organizations active in the economic development of Southwest Indiana

The grant, one of thirteen awarded this week, is through the Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development initiative, or WIRED. This is the second grant the state of Indiana has received under this program, which is designed to promote partnerships to transform and rebuild regional economies. Last February, North Central Indiana was one of thirteen regions to receive a grant in the first round of WIRED grants.

"To build a more prosperous Indiana, we'll have to attract new and more diverse kinds of jobs beyond those we've relied on. Give young Hoosiers the skills required by those jobs, and veteran workers the retraining to compete for them, and Indiana will be a match for anyplace on earth," said Governor Mitch Daniels.

"This plan will succeed because it recognizes the connection between workforce development and lifelong learning strategies, along with regional economic development," said Andrew Penca, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

“We appreciate the support of both the Department of Labor and State of Indiana for providing assistance to our efforts to grow the economy of Southwest Indiana. We share their belief in the importance of education and training to prepare our workers – current and emerging -- for today’s changing economy,” said Andy Goebel, chair of the Regional Workforce Board of Southwestern Indiana, which led the grant application. “We have brought together a strong group of individuals and organizations who will work together and develop the necessary strategies to maximize our use of education, workforce and economic development to grow our economy.”

Penca, Goebel, and other consortium officials will join Emily DeRocco, Assistant Secretary of Employment and Training of the U.S. Department of Labor in a kickoff event in Evansville on March 31 to formally launch the next phase of the local WIRED initiative.

The region will receive an immediate grant of \$500,000 to support the development of a comprehensive implementation plan. Following the completion and acceptance of the plan, the region will then receive an additional \$4.5 million over a three-year period. Last year, the region received \$100,000 to commence planning. According to federal officials, the funds are intended to act as seed funding, serving as an initial investment to be supplemented by other public or private sources in support of the region’s strategy.